

NASA Public Affairs Web Initiatives

Connect with the Universe

www.nasa.gov

☒ Transparency ☒ Participation ☒ Collaboration

NASA uses a variety of methods on the Internet to involve the public with its missions. At the forefront stands NASA.gov—an unparalleled wealth of information concerning NASA activities around the world. Additionally, we emphasize the use of social media applications in order to directly reach out to the public. Tens of thousands of people follow NASA activities on the official NASA Facebook page. NASA TV content on YouTube is one of the top ranked channels with more than one million people who followed Astronaut Mike Massimino’s adventures as he was on the STS-125 Hubble repair mission in 2009.

Overview

The first NASA Web sites appeared in the early 1990s, and the Agency’s primary site, www.nasa.gov, has evolved since then through four major iterations. The most recent version, released in 2007, enables the Agency to be more participatory with the public through a variety of social features. Dozens of NASA employees blog on blogs.nasa.gov, sharing personal accounts of their experiences while working for the Agency. Visitors can comment on and rate news articles and other content. Features such as NASA chats enable the public to directly communication with NASA experts about topics they are curious about.

We have been exploring social media for several years, connecting employees to each other and with the public. These connections not only give a more personal side to our exploration, they help employees collaborate more effectively. In 2008, the Mars Phoenix mission landed on the North Pole and began looking for ice. When ice was found, NASA’s Jet Propulsion Lab tweeted @MarsPhoenix to tell the world, “Are you ready to celebrate? Well, get ready: We have ICE!!!! Yes, ICE, *WATER ICE* on Mars! woot!!! Best day ever!!!”

A social media policy is under consideration. So far different programs and NASA Centers have issued guidance for their employees. We have relied on our professional staff to use appropriate decorum and understand that social media is just another communications medium. An approach

NASA Twitter Activities

twitter.com/NASA



NASA Tweet-up attendees in the Apollo Launch Control Center at Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas

More than 320,000 people follow NASA’s main Twitter account, which shares real-time information on NASA news, activities, and mission information. NASA has organized events, called “Tweet-ups,” where members of the public have close encounters with NASA facilities and experts across the country. Apart from NASA.gov, about 20 astronauts and hundreds of individual NASA employees tweet on personal accounts, giving members of the public an up-close and personal insight on the activities going on inside the agency.

that involves trusting our workforce, learning from missteps, and celebrating successes will continue with whatever policy is issued.

These initiatives, among others, have resulted in a huge increase in the amount of people who visit NASA on the Web. In 2009, the main NASA.gov home page received nearly 250 million visits, enabling NASA content to reach more people than ever before. Additionally, the main NASA page is the recipient of two Webby awards, and NASA social media channels received more votes for 2009 Shorty awards than any other government Agency.

How This Fits into Open Government

The NASA.gov Web page offers thousands of opportunities for the public to view details and discuss NASA missions and operations. More than 600 people have accounts on NASA.gov's content management system, resulting in a vast array of published information from across the Agency. Additionally, the site is connected to more than 100 different social media feeds, inviting visitors to participate and collaborate on NASA initiatives through interfaces which they are familiar with. Our approach toward embracing new communication mediums and trusting our workforce has created a positive culture around the Internet.

Open Government Goals

- Three Months
 - Deploy new Flash-based on-demand video player that enables the public to comment and discuss videos posted to the Web site.
 - Increase opportunities for public to directly connect with NASA experts through channels such as NASA chats.
- Six Months
 - Transition to new support contract allowing greater

NASA Web Facts in 2009

4.4 1.8

Page Views
(in Billions)

Web content delivered
(in Petabytes)

21,231

Total Time Spent by visitors on NASA.gov
(in days)

NASA Chats

www.nasa.gov/connect/chat



Start of a NASA Chatroom

NASA Chats are an opportunity for the public to ask the experts who work at NASA questions about a given subject and get real-time answers. These question and answer sessions between the public and NASA scientists, engineers, and support personnel are a perfect opportunity to allow for more direct knowledge to be shared. Opportunities in the NASA Chats exist for students to learn more about science, technology, and engineering as well as general questions about NASA's activities and missions.

- use of computer resources for NASA.gov projects.
- Release a policy on Social Media at NASA, if appropriate.
- One and Two Years
 - Work to streamline Internet operations and continue to explore new initiatives to connect with users interested in NASA.

Useful Links

1. Collect and Collaborate with NASA: www.nasa.gov/connect/index.html
2. NASA TV: www.nasa.gov/ntv
3. Image of the Day Gallery: www.nasa.gov/multimedia/imagegallery/iotd.html
4. NASA Media Resources: www.nasa.gov/news/reports/index.html
5. NASA Blogs: blogs.nasa.gov